

**CHARNOCK INITIAL  
REGIONAL RESPONSE ACTIVITIES  
Charnock Sub-Basin; Los Angeles, California**

**Task 10.1.2  
Numerical Groundwater Flow Model Report**

*Submitted to:*

California Regional Water Quality Control Board,  
Los Angeles Region

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,  
Region IX

*On behalf of:*

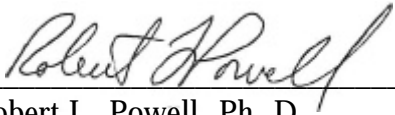
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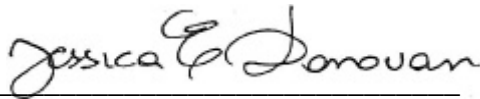
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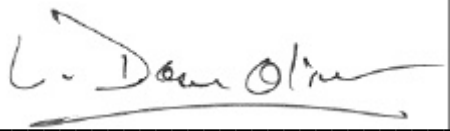
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	ES-1
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1-1
1.1 BACKGROUND .....	1-2
1.2 MODELING OBJECTIVES.....	1-2
1.3 APPROACH.....	1-3
2.0 CONCEPTUAL MODEL .....	2-1
2.1 HYDROGEOLOGIC SETTING .....	2-1
2.1.1 Physiography and Geology .....	2-1
2.1.2 Regional Groundwater Use and Hydrology .....	2-2
2.2 HYDROSTRATIGRAPHY .....	2-2
2.3 HYDRAULIC BOUNDARIES .....	2-5
2.4 HYDRAULIC PROPERTIES.....	2-7
2.4.1 Aquifer Behavior and Properties .....	2-7
2.4.1.1 Shallow Aquifer Properties .....	2-7
2.4.1.2 Silverado Aquifer Properties.....	2-8
2.4.1.3 Ballona Aquifer Properties.....	2-9
2.4.2 Aquitard Properties.....	2-10
2.5 GROUNDWATER OCCURRENCE AND FLOW .....	2-11
2.6 GROUNDWATER BUDGET .....	2-14
2.6.1 Groundwater Inflows.....	2-14
2.6.1.1 Areal Infiltration.....	2-14
2.6.1.2 Subsurface Flow Across the Northwest Boundary.....	2-15
2.6.1.3 Subsurface Flow Across the Southeast Boundary.....	2-15
2.6.1.4 Subsurface Flow Across the Charnock and Overland Faults .....	2-16
2.6.1.5 Subsurface Flow Across the Basal Boundary.....	2-16
2.6.1.6 Potential Point/Line Sources.....	2-16
2.6.2 Groundwater Outflows .....	2-17
2.6.3 Water Budget .....	2-18
3.0 MODEL SELECTION .....	3-1
3.1 SELECTED CODES.....	3-1
3.1.1 Flow Model.....	3-1
3.1.2 Flowpath Model.....	3-2
4.0 MODEL DESIGN.....	4-1
4.1 MODEL DOMAIN / GRID .....	4-1
4.1.1 Model Grid .....	4-1
4.1.2 Model Layers.....	4-2
4.2 HYDRAULIC PARAMETERS.....	4-3
4.2.1 Hydraulic Conductivity .....	4-3

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
4.2.2 Storage .....	4-5
4.2.3 Specific Yield .....	4-5
4.2.4 Porosity .....	4-6
4.3 BOUNDARY CONDITIONS.....	4-6
4.4 FAULTS .....	4-7
4.5 RECHARGE.....	4-8
4.6 WELL SIMULATION .....	4-8
4.7 NUMERICAL SOLVER PARAMETERS.....	4-9
5.0 MODEL CALIBRATION.....	5-1
5.1 CALIBRATION PERIODS.....	5-1
5.1.1 1993-1995 Steady State .....	5-1
5.1.2 1995-2000 Regional Recovery .....	5-2
5.1.3 1998 Regional Assessment Aquifer Test .....	5-3
5.2 EVALUATION OF CALIBRATION .....	5-4
5.2.1 1993-1995 Steady State Simulation.....	5-4
5.2.1.1 Data Selection.....	5-4
5.2.1.2 Data Comparison.....	5-4
5.2.2 1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation .....	5-5
5.2.2.1 Data Selection.....	5-5
5.2.2.2 Data Comparison.....	5-6
5.2.3 1998 Pump Test Transient Simulation .....	5-6
5.2.3.1 Data Selection.....	5-6
5.2.3.2 Data Comparison.....	5-7
5.3 CALIBRATION MODIFICATIONS.....	5-7
5.3.1 Modifications for Water Balance .....	5-7
5.3.2 Modifications for Shallow Aquifer Southwest Gradient.....	5-7
5.3.2.1 Shallow Overland Fault Hydraulic Flow Barriers .....	5-8
5.3.2.2 Lowered Bottom Elevations Northeast of Sepulveda-Venice .....	5-8
5.3.2.3 Lowered Bottom Elevations Northwest of the Well Fields.. ..	5-8
5.3.2.4 Hydraulic Conductivity Changes.....	5-9
5.4 CALIBRATION RESULTS .....	5-10
5.4.1 Steady State Simulation .....	5-10
5.4.1.1 Water Balance .....	5-10
5.4.1.2 Water Level Maps.....	5-12
5.4.1.3 Hydrographs .....	5-12
5.4.2 1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation .....	5-12
5.4.2.1 Water Level Maps.....	5-12
5.4.2.2 Hydrographs .....	5-13
5.4.2.3 Statistics .....	5-14
5.4.3 1998 Pump Test Transient Simulation .....	5-15

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<b>Page</b>
5.4.3.1 Hydrographs .....	5-15
5.4.3.2 Statistics .....	5-15
6.0 PARAMETER SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS .....	6-1
6.1 SINGLE PARAMETER CALIBRATION SENSITIVITY .....	6-2
6.1.1 Selection of Model Inputs to be Varied .....	6-2
6.1.2 Property Zones/Reaches and Input Parameter Ranges.....	6-2
6.1.2.1 Horizontal and Vertical Hydraulic Conductivity.....	6-3
6.1.2.2 Storativity and Specific Yield.....	6-3
6.1.2.3 Fault Conductance.....	6-3
6.1.2.4 Head-Dependent Boundary Condition Parameters.....	6-4
6.1.2.5 Areal Recharge Rate .....	6-4
6.1.2.6 Specified Flow Rate From Northwest Boundary.....	6-4
6.1.3 Results.....	6-5
6.1.3.1 Horizontal and Vertical Hydraulic Conductivity.....	6-5
6.1.3.2 Storativity and Specific Yield.....	6-5
6.1.3.3 Fault Conductance.....	6-6
6.1.3.4 Head-Dependent Boundary Condition Parameters.....	6-6
6.1.3.5 Areal Recharge Rate .....	6-6
6.1.3.6 Specified Inflow Rate From the Northwest Boundary .....	6-6
6.1.4 Summary of Calibration Sensitivity .....	6-6
6.2 SHALLOW AQUIFER GRADIENT SENSITIVITY .....	6-7
6.2.1 Approach.....	6-7
6.2.2 Results.....	6-7
6.3 SAFE YIELD SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS .....	6-8
6.3.1 Approach.....	6-8
6.3.2 Results.....	6-9
6.3.3 Summary .....	6-10
7.0 MODEL USE IN ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS .....	7-1
8.0 REFERENCES .....	8-1

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)**

### **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2-1	Approximate Flow Distribution Through Hydrostratigraphic Zones (Derived from EBF Testing)
Table 2-2	Hydraulic Properties of Hydrostratigraphic Units of the Charnock Sub-Basin
Table 2-3	Values of Hydraulic Conductivity and Porosity Derived From Core Samples
Table 4-1	Pumping Distribution between Model Layers for Pumping Wells
Table 4-2	Remediation Wells Online Beginning November 1999
Table 4-3	PCG2 Solver Parameters
Table 4-4	Resaturation Parameters
Table 5-1	1993 Steady State Simulation Calibration Targets
Table 5-2	1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation Calibration Targets
Table 5-3	1998 Aquifer Test Transient Simulation Calibration Targets
Table 5-4	Charnock Sub-Basin Subareas with Lithologic Profiles Used for Layer 4 Bottom Elevations
Table 5-5	Charnock Sub-Basin Water Balance for 1993-1995 Steady State Simulation
Table 6-1	Correspondence Between Stratigraphic Layers, Model Layers and Aquifer Property Zones
Table 6-2	Hydraulic Conductivity Ranges Used in Sensitivity Analysis by Aquifer Property Zone
Table 6-3	Storage Coefficient Ranges Used in Sensitivity Analysis by Aquifer Property Zone
Table 6-4	Fault Conductance Ranges Used in Sensitivity Analysis by Reach
Table 6-5	Head-Dependent Boundary Conductance Ranges Used in Sensitivity Analysis by Reach
Table 6-6	Head-Dependent Boundary Reference Head Ranges Used in Sensitivity Analysis by Reach
Table 6-7	Specified Flow Ranges Used in Sensitivity Analysis
Table 6-8	Parameter Ranges Used in Shallow Gradient Sensitivity Analysis
Table 6-9	Parameter Ranges Used in Safe Yield Sensitivity Analysis

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS** **(Continued)**

### **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1-1	Regional Setting
Figure 2-1	Charnock Hydrogeologic Setting and Study Area
Figure 2-2	Generalized Geologic Map
Figure 2-3	a. Geologic Section X-X' b. Geologic Section Y-Y'
Figure 2-4	Surface Geology Map of Charnock Sub-Basin and Vicinity
Figure 2-5	Schematic Cross Section E-E' with Hydrostratigraphic Zones
Figure 2-6	Cross Section Location Map
Figure 2-7	a. Cross Section PP-PP' b. Cross Section QQ-QQ' c. Cross Section RR-RR' d. Cross Section VV-VV' e. Cross Section AA-AA'
Figure 2-8	a. Groundwater Elevations – May 1941 b. Groundwater Elevations – April 1945
Figure 2-9	Historical Pumping and Precipitation (at Culver City Station)
Figure 2-10	a. Silverado Groundwater Elevations, October 1996 b. Silverado Groundwater Elevations, May 1997 c. Silverado Groundwater Elevations, April 1998 d. Silverado Groundwater Elevations, April 1999 e. Silverado Groundwater Elevations, September 1999 f. Silverado Groundwater Elevations, June 2000
Figure 2-11	a. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, September 1993 b. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, June 1995 c. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, June 1996 d. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, October 1996 e. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, May 1997 f. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, April 1998 g. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, April 1999 h. Shallow Groundwater Elevations, July 1999
Figure 2-12	Shallow/Cross-Screened Water Level Comparison Before Recovery (Through October 1996)
Figure 2-13	Average Vertical Gradients Since Well Field Shutoff
Figure 2-14	Hydrographs for Vertical Gradient Clusters at Sepulveda-Venice
Figure 2-15	Schematic Diagram of Ground Water Balance
Figure 4-1	Numerical Model Grid Outline
Figure 4-2	Numerical Model Grid with Boundary Condition Types
Figure 4-3	Geomatrix Numerical Model Grid

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **(Continued)**

Figure 4-4	Hydrostratigraphic Zones and Model Layers
Figure 4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Elevations Top of Model Layer 1</li> <li>b. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 1</li> <li>c. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 2</li> <li>d. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 3</li> <li>e. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 4</li> <li>f. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 5</li> <li>g. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 6</li> <li>h. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 7</li> <li>i. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 8</li> <li>j. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 9</li> <li>k. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 10</li> <li>l. Elevations Bottom of Model Layer 11</li> </ul>
Figure 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Thickness of Model Layer 1</li> <li>b. Thickness of Model Layer 2</li> <li>c. Thickness of Model Layer 3</li> <li>d. Thickness of Model Layer 4</li> <li>e. Thickness of Model Layer 5</li> <li>f. Thickness of Model Layer 6</li> <li>g. Thickness of Model Layer 7</li> <li>h. Thickness of Model Layer 8</li> <li>i. Thickness of Model Layer 9</li> <li>j. Thickness of Model Layer 10</li> <li>k. Thickness of Model Layer 11</li> </ul>
Figure 4-7	Hydraulic Conductivity Values (ft/d) in Model Layers by Sub-Basin
Figure 4-8	Hydraulic Conductivities in Model Layer 5, Shallow Aquitard
Figure 4-9	Storage Values in Model Layers by Sub-Basin
Figure 4-10	Numerical Model Boundary Conditions
Figure 4-11	Numerical Model Fault Parameters
Figure 4-12	Extraction Within Model Domain June 1993-August 2000
Figure 4-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Extraction Wells 1993-2000, Study Area</li> <li>b. Extraction Wells 1993-2000, Well Field Area</li> </ul>
Figure 4-14	Mass Balance Residual Over Time (1995-2000 Transient Run)
Figure 5-1	Groundwater Elevations June 1993-July 1995
Figure 5-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 1993 Steady State Simulation Calibration Targets</li> <li>b. 1993 Steady State Simulation Calibration Targets, Sepulveda-Venice Area</li> <li>c. 1993 Steady State Simulation Calibration Targets, Sepulveda-Washington Area</li> </ul>
Figure 5-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation Calibration Targets</li> <li>b. 1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation Calibration Targets, Sepulveda-Palms and Well Fields</li> </ul>



## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	c. 1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation Calibration Targets, Sepulveda-Venice Area
	d. 1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation Calibration Targets, Sepulveda-Washington Area
Figure 5-4	a. February 1998 Aquifer Test Transient Simulation Calibration Targets by Top Layer
	b. February 1998 Aquifer Test Transient Simulation Calibration Targets by Bottom Layer
Figure 5-5	Example of Dry Shallow Aquifer (Layer 4) at Overland Fault (April 1998 Geomatrix Model)
Figure 5-6	Bottom of Geomatrix Layer 4 Toward Overland Fault
Figure 5-7	a. Subareas with Lithologic Profiles
	b. Subareas with Lithologic Profiles, Around the Well Fields
Figure 5-8	Amount Layer 4 Bottom Elevation Lowered (ft) from Geomatrix Model
Figure 5-9	Charnock Study Area Water Balance Flows
Figure 5-10	Charnock Sub-Basin Water Balance Flows
Figure 5-11	Steady State Gradient Calibration, June 1993-July 1995
Figure 5-12	a. – f. Calibration Hydrographs, 1993-1995 Extraction Pumping Steady State Simulation
Figure 5-13	a. Shallow Aquifer (Layer 4) Water Levels, October 27-28, 1997
	b. Shallow Aquifer (Layer 4) Water Levels, April 19-23, 1998
	c. Shallow Aquifer (Layer 4) Water Levels, October 25-28, 1998
	d. Shallow Aquifer (Layer 4) Water Levels, June 20, 1999
Figure 5-14	a. Upper Silverado (Layer 7) Water Levels, October 27-28, 1997
	b. Upper Silverado (Layer 7) Water Levels, April 19-23, 1998
	c. Upper Silverado (Layer 7) Water Levels, October 25-28, 1998
	d. Upper Silverado (Layer 7) Water Levels, June 20, 1999
Figure 5-15	a. – j. Calibration Hydrographs, 1995-2000 Regional Recovery Transient Simulation
Figure 5-16	a. – g. Calibration Hydrographs, February 1998 Aquifer Test Transient Simulation
Figure 6-1	Hydraulic Conductivity Zones, Layer 5
Figure 6-2	General-Head Boundary (GHB) and Horizontal Flow Barrier (HFB) Reach Locations
Figure 6-3	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Horizontal Hydraulic Conductivity by Zone
Figure 6-4	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Vertical Hydraulic Conductivity by Zone
Figure 6-5	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Storativity by Zone
Figure 6-6	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Specific Yield by Zone
Figure 6-7	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Fault Conductance (HFB) by Reach

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **(Continued)**

Figure 6-8	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Head-Dependent Boundary (GHB) Conductance by Reach
Figure 6-9	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Head-Dependent Boundary (GHB) Reference Head by Reach
Figure 6-10	Calibration Sensitivity to Changes in Areal Recharge and Northwest Boundary Inflow
Figure 6-11	Shallow Aquifer Gradient Sensitivity
Figure 6-12	Simulated Water Levels at Well CH-16 Under 6,000 ac-ft/yr Pumping
Figure 6-13	Simulated Water Levels at Shell Well MW12s Under 6,000 ac-ft/yr Pumping
Figure 6-14	Simulated Water Levels at Well CH-16 Under 8,000 ac-ft/yr Pumping
Figure 6-15	Simulated Water Levels at Shell Well MW12s Under 8,000 ac-ft/yr Pumping
Figure 6-16	Groundwater Levels after 40 years of Pumping, Base Case, Charnock Well Fields at 8,000 ac-ft/yr
Figure 6-17	Groundwater Levels after 40 years of Pumping, Base Case, Charnock Well Fields at 6,000 ac-ft/yr

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to the Scope of Work of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (RWQCB) Stipulated Agreement (SA) No. 00-064 and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9 (USEPA) Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) USEPA Docket No. RCRA 7003-09-2000-0003, this Numerical Groundwater Flow Model Report (the "Report") is submitted to the RWQCB and USEPA (the "Agencies") by Shell Oil Company, Shell Oil Products Company, and Equilon Enterprises LLC (the "Respondents") in partial fulfillment of Task 10 of the *Scope of Work (SOW) for Initial Response Activities to Address MTBE and Other Gasoline Constituents in the Charnock Sub-Basin*. Work to fulfill the SOW is conducted as part of the Charnock Initial Regional Response Activities (CIRRA).

One of the more significant objectives of the SOW is to evaluate groundwater flow and the movement of gasoline-related constituents, including methyl tertiary-butyl-ether (MTBE) within the Charnock Sub-Basin under current conditions and a variety of remedial action scenarios. These objectives will be addressed through development and application of a numerical model of groundwater flow as described in this Report. The model allows the rapid synthesis, analysis, and interpretation of the hydrogeology of the Charnock Sub-Basin and contaminant migration pathways.

The conceptual description of the hydrogeology of the Charnock Sub-Basin was presented in the Task 9 Conceptual Flow and Transport Model Report dated August 17, 2000. In addition, aquifer properties were developed and refined in numerical modeling tasks undertaken by Geomatrix, the Respondents, Chevron Products Company ("Chevron"), and Exxon Company, USA ("Exxon") during a three-year period from 1996 to 1999. These activities included model calibration and model parameter sensitivity analysis.

The numerical model of groundwater flow presented herein is based on the model developed previously by Geomatrix. ENVIRON thoroughly reviewed the Geomatrix model and the needs of the CIRRA project and determined that two primary modifications were necessary. First, the model required extension of the grid to the northwest in order to model potential extraction in that area of the Sub-Basin. Second, improved prediction of water levels in the Shallow Aquifer was necessary to reproduce the observed westward gradient in and around the Sepulveda-Venice area. Aside from these two areas of focus, the revised model retains most of the characteristics of the Geomatrix model, including its degree of calibration and many of the hydrologic properties in the Silverado Aquifer and outlying areas.

Section 1.0 of the report presents a brief background of the site and the resulting motivation for the numerical model. It also outlines the modeling objectives relative to the CIRRA project. Finally, Section 1.0 highlights the steps taken in developing the numerical model.

Section 2.0 of this report summarizes and updates the conceptual model described in the Task 9 Conceptual Model Report. The primary update to the conceptual model is an increase in the

amount of flow coming from the shallowest parts of the Overland Avenue Fault. The westward gradient observed in the Shallow Aquifer implies a source of water coming from the east. Although the results of ongoing field investigations will shed further light on the nature of the westward gradient and the source of the water, a more permeable Overland Fault in the shallowest hydrostratigraphic layers provides an explanation for both the westward gradient and the downward vertical gradients observed east of Interstate-405. Other modifications to the conceptual model include the apparent thinning of the Shallow Aquitard to the northwest of the Well Fields and a reduced slope of the top of that aquitard to the northeast of the Well Fields.

Section 3.0 describes the computer codes chosen for numerical modeling.

Section 4.0 presents the numerical model design, including the grid, the modeled parameters, the boundary conditions, and their relationships to the conceptual model. Many of the parameters from the Geomatrix model were retained and are described in this section. This section also describes the methods used to extend the grid, including addition of boundary conditions at the foot of the Santa Monica Mountains and extension of hydrologic parameters between the former boundaries of the model and the new boundaries.

Section 5.0 describes the model calibration. Three different calibration periods were selected for the model. The first calibration period represents the period between 1993 and 1995 when Well Field pumping was relatively constant; this period was then modeled as pseudo-steady-state. Although water level data were not widespread during this period, it provides an approximate calibration measure, and the simulation then allows a measure of where the water sources are to the Sub-Basin during pumping conditions. The results of this calibration period provide the initial water levels to the second calibration period, which is from 1995 to 2000. This period includes the last year of extraction at the Charnock Well Fields followed by the regional recovery. During this period, additional wells were installed as part of individual site investigations and a regional monitoring program, permitting greater calibration to water levels. This calibration period was emphasized the most. During this period, Geomatrix conducted a three-day regional aquifer test at the Charnock-16 well, located at the City of Santa Monica (COSM) Well Field. The third calibration period is a simulation of this aquifer test using the wells that were monitored during the test.

These calibrations were evaluated in slightly different ways, based upon the availability of data and upon the conceptual features they were to represent. The early steady-state period was evaluated primarily through approximate matches to water levels. During this period, water level data often were associated with extraction wells, perched wells, or wells cross-screened across multiple hydrostratigraphic layers. As a consequence, only approximate calibration to available data was done. Comparison of the numerical water budget to the conceptual water budget then demonstrated similar distribution of water sources.

The longer calibration period was evaluated through comparison of hydrographs to data, water level calibration statistics, and review of the Shallow Aquifer gradient predicted by the model relative to observed data. Hydrographs showed generally good fits of model predictions to

observed data. Calibration statistics were also good, slightly better than those obtained using Geomatrix's original model. The model also showed a westward gradient of approximately the correct magnitude and direction.

The aquifer test calibration was evaluated through hydrographs and through standard calibration statistics. The model and the data showed drawdown response occurring in the Silverado Aquifer as far south as the Sepulveda-Venice area. Drawdowns in the Shallow Aquifer were generally less, and the model represented most of these adequately.

During calibration, two primary modifications were made in order to achieve the modeling objectives. The first, as mentioned above, was the increased permeability of the Overland Avenue Fault, allowing greater flow of water in from the Crestal Sub-Basin. The hydraulic conductivity of the hydraulic flow barrier representing this fault was increased to 1 ft/d, which was enough to allow water to flow while maintaining a significant head drop across the fault. The second adjustment was to lower the elevation of the top of the Shallow Aquitard in two areas based on a review of existing data along with preliminary results from the CIRRA Task 12 regional investigation. The first area was between the Overland Avenue Fault and the Sepulveda-Venice area. The second area was generally northwest of the Well Fields. Lowering the top of aquitard elevations allowed any flow of water from the east to better reproduce the observed westward gradient in the shallow aquifer.

Section 6.0 outlines the sensitivity/uncertainty analysis carried out on the model. Based on the ranges of data values for hydrologic parameters and boundary conditions, ENVIRON carried out both a point-sensitivity analysis and more refined sensitivity analysis of the Shallow Aquifer gradient. The point-sensitivity analysis identified the areas of the model where changes to hydraulic conductivity, storage, or boundary conditions most affected the 1995-2000 calibration statistics. This sensitivity analysis suggested that the storage and specific yield, which control the rise of water levels in the Shallow Aquifer, tend to be the most important factors in optimizing calibration statistics. The sensitivity to the Shallow Aquifer gradient was evaluated by examining the magnitude and direction of the observed and computed gradients relative to important parameter values, such as the hydraulic conductivity of the Overland Avenue Fault. Although increasing the conductivity of this fault would improve the match to the observed westward gradient magnitude, it would also cause the modeled water levels to be too high.

A third type of sensitivity analysis was also carried out. This sensitivity is of the model to predictions in long-term water levels as a consequence of various extraction rates in the Charnock Sub-Basin. Since the model may be used for an analysis of the safe yield of the Sub-Basin, a preliminary evaluation procedure of safe yield was outlined. For two extraction rates, 6,000 and 8,000 ac-ft/yr, water levels were modeled using the base model and various modifications of the model to evaluate whether the model made different predictions with the modifications. Sensitivity to fault conductances was observed, although the greatest differences were found using fault conductances that generally caused poor calibration. In general, the 8,000 ac-ft/yr simulations consistently showed mining of water from the adjudicated West Coast Basin and declining water levels even after 40 years of pumping.

These simulations also consistently projected the Shallow Aquifer going dry in the Sepulveda-Venice area, potentially inhibiting local remediation systems. Most simulations of 6,000 ac-ft/yr extraction, on the other hand, did not cause water levels to drop below the bottom of the Shallow Aquifer at Sepulveda-Venice. These simulations also reached a nearly stable water level profile after 40 years that does not mine water from the West Coast Basin.

A brief summary of how the model is planned to be used for analyzing remedial alternatives and the potential refinements necessary for that work is presented in Section 7.0.